

Approx. 1736

Three Days

By

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The effigy wasn't his to begin with, of course. Beyond its original owner, the effigy was previously owned by Augustine Dagenhart who had won the curious things from Markus Grey. How Benson Atwood actually came about the icon was less adventurous than he made it appear. Augustine gave him the strange statue as a test.

"Don't worry," He started. "It's like Moldavite. Things that are in your way... It'll... well... It's a little different for everyone I suppose..." He spoke with a sigh and a chuckle on his lips as if he were going to tell his younger a cautionary tale. Augustine decided against it. "Be careful, friend. "

"I'm not a believer in my artifacts, I simply have them as relics, snapshots of the past. Nothing more, nothing less." Benson narrowed his eyes in disbelief that his long-time friend believed in superstitions.

"Your business. Not mine. I subscribe to the sweet Void but find what you will. In this line of business, it pays best to believe in something." The senior Dagenhart offered his kind warning.

"Forgive me but I don't see the correlation as you do, Sir. If I believed in every relic I collected I would be dead."

"You will be. You're human after all." He quipped with a grin.

"And you're not?" Benson laughed, Augustine merely smirked, as if smiling at a child handing them a toy phone.

"I'm merely old... and death greets me as a bastard friend. Be careful with the new toy, if you're not careful, you'll find a terrible tune. Tenebrae No Ligare." Augustine Dagenhart chuckled taking leave of the small office.

He left Benson to his work with the effigy. The thing was a stout statue. Carved out of neither stone nor wood or ivory he could name. It was as smooth as marble and dark as the abyss whispered to Friedrich Neitchze. A feline of three faces two of which were upside down as if it were a horror from Abrahamic lore, and tendrils came from the waist of the bestial icon. They twirled and wrapped around one another until they formed a solid base. He pondered the thing and disregarded it until some days later.

His father's real estate and construction company was in debt. Thousands of acreage of oceanfront property that couldn't seemingly be developed. A real estate mogul, Hamilton llc, just outbid him for the new Catalina Island zoning. Benson Atwood was facing financial ruin without the promise and purchase of new developments. The legacy that was built from the southwest to the South East was about to be in utter disarray. Not to mention the masses of useless land on the swamps of Reviere D'Erbane, that was plaguing him. His inheritance of the family business wasn't the cash cow he wanted or needed it to be. Atwood's wants were far greater than his needs and he was now in a rut.

His office overlooked nothing. He was surprised that Augustine Dagenhart even gave him the honor of entertaining him in his jail cell of an office in Downtown Los Angeles. It was on the first floor of a 3 story building that was swallowed by the towers looming over in all directions. *How long had this building been here?* He pondered to himself as he drunkenly stumbled in. He didn't want to go home, that's where his responsibilities were. In the office that is where others took care of his problems at the drop of a hat. All of three people that he trusted to manage the properties he had left. He didn't have to think about it, he collected money to funnel into his lavished expeditions with the Greys and the Dagenharts. No matter the size of his contribution it was but a drop in comparison to their pools of wealth.

"What interest would they see in a beggar?" Benson whined at the thought of losing his friends if he lost what little fortune he had. He barely had a name for himself and yet his two closest friends were moguls of their industry while he was just another failing subject of his. Did the fellows actually enjoy his company and friendship?

In the throws of his existential crisis, Benson found the statue in the dark before he could find his tumbler. With the effigy in one hand, he turned on the desk light with the other. He was lost in his observation of things. How long did he inspect each carved tendril? How long did his stare at the faces of the feline? How long had it been since he had been day drinking? That was about a week ago.

Today was a special occasion, the construction of the new island met its 100th-day mark. News crews were present to mark the pseudo-achievement of a job well done. New commerce and a boost to the economy made the governor proud. The governor wanted to show of

what part of the infrastructure bill was paying for... and what his company was missing out on.

Benson held the statue for hours into the midday pondering away his plight, cursing the entire site. The office staff didn't bother Benson, they saw his door was closed and they all knew not to knock unless it was life or death. Also, they suspected that he would be in a foul mood. All that morning the news on most local changes praised the work of their competitors, Hamilton llc.; they knew what to expect from a day like today. A drunken Benson; if not that then a very bitter Benson. Thankfully they didn't get the latter to deal with.

Finally, he sat the object down and proceeded to lean forward into his own hands and sighed.

Just then he heard it. There was a low hum being emitted from the statue. A tune and melody that he had no recollection of but felt like a long-loved memory nonetheless. It was a sound of his mother's people and tale older than his father's name. It was the sound of peace and sleep. It was the sound of a hypnotic lullaby that soothed him into submission.

Benson Atwood closed his eyes and drifted into a slumber that lasted nearly four hours in this quiet office. Just him and the effigy. That was until he felt a rumble and was awakened by sirens and distant screaming. He awoke with a stir and the statue was silent and slick to the touch.

"What the fuck is happening?" He hissed slamming open his door. "Is this an earthquake?"

"There was an explosion offshore." One of his entourage replied.

"We're in the heart of LA, gods, how big was it?! What is that sound?"

"We don't know sir, It--"

"Sirens, it sounds like Tornado Sirens..." Another member answered transfixed on the news flipping back and forth between the channels. "The New Catalina, sir... the foundations are... look"

That is when Benson saw two things. The first and clear thing was the ocean on fire and blazing from the explosion. The second thing he saw was opportunity. The ocean churning with black billowing smoke

gave him hope that he had certainly lost before his drunken nap. Hamilton LLC just lost their project to whatever happened, he didn't care what happened. All he knew was that was a catastrophe that can bury a well-established name. Hamilton's mistake was being aired on all channels simultaneously. How many lives could have been lost already? The damage that was caused to the ecosystem was again, the last thing on his mind, but it played a factor in his summations.

"Petra, get Grey Insurance on the line -" He interrupted the woman's flipping of the channels for only a moment before going back into her dream-like state seemingly absorbing the chaos and smiling at the bits of ire and gore that she may find.

"Mr. Atwood, There's a phone call for you."

"Great minds! It has to be Markus. I'll take it in my office." He nearly skipped with a rejuvenated hope in the deaths of construction workers that weren't his. The drunken sad man was gone, even if only for a moment... he was gone.

"Hello, Markus?" Benson chuckled.

"Sorry to disappoint, no, this is Eris. Eris Dagenhart. You're friends with my grandfather Augustine Dagenhart."

Her voice was as sweet as honeysuckle and as rich as a sherry. Yet at the utterance of her name, his spine was chilled. The color left his face and nervousness found its way into his chest and he could not tell why.

"H-How can I help you." He stammered smiling hoping the smile would still his resolve that was questionably shaken. "Is anything the matter with your Grandfather?"

"No he's fine. He's concerned about your well-being. You do have the statue, yes?"

"Yes. Th-'

"You have seen the news, yes?" She interjected sharply yet sweetly.

"Yes."

"My grandfather warned you about the humming."

"Yes."

"That wasn't a question. It is coming. It heard you and you accepted its song." Eris spoke gravely. "Or do you wish to see how this plays out?"

There was a darkness that loomed over him. There was pressure against his temples replaying her last words. Did he wish to see how this plays out? There was no doubt that there were lives lost, he accounted for that in his competitor's demise. Could he stop this? No? This was a game. Augustine had a sick sense of humor, he sighed in his mind.

"Coming for me? See how this plays?" He repeated to the woman on the other end of the phone. "That seems like a futile plan. If I play, what comes for me? This is all very surprising I didn't expect this from all Dag--"

"The darkness that swallows us all whole. But more or less, the most original owner of the statue... It was never my grandfather's to lend. He stole it from a thief... your friend circle is indeed a cycle of feinds." She chuckled lowly. "She's not happy and I can't blame her..."

"You know the owner?" he scoffed not believing that such outstanding men, whom he called friends, could possibly be thieves.

"Best friend. I'll tell you what, I'll give you three days. On the fourth day meet me at the Crossed Blades"

"As they say, bet."

Eris's laughter roared through the receiver "I see you. Tenebrae No Ligare, Mr. Atwood!"